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AUTHOR Feiman-Nemser, Sharon
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ABSTRACT

Learning to teach ought to be a major province of inservice rather than of preservice teacher education. A "learning to teach continuum" consists of four phases in a teacher's development. During the pretraining phase, which begins with the first childhood exposure to school, patterns and ideas of teaching are formed, and a model of teaching is internalized. In this way, before starting their formal pedagogical work, teachers have already had considerable informal preparation for teaching. The preservice phase of a teacher's development exposes teachers to the knowledge base of the profession in a systematic way. There is a general impression that teachers think their education courses are too theoretical and not sufficiently practical and that the most valuable part of teacher education is student teaching. Student teaching may, however, foster too narrow a vision of teaching. It is during the first years of actual teaching, or the induction phase of learning to teach, that the teacher's view of teaching broadens from learning to teach to learning from teaching. The problems faced by beginning teachers should alert them to their needs and provide a basis for future problem solving strategies. The inservice phase of learning spans the rest of the teacher's career, where helping teachers to become motivated to improve their own performance and expand their own learning is a legitimate inservice priority. The teacher center concept is vital for inservice education, since it provides professional interactions with peers. (JD)

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Staff Development and Learning to Teach

Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Michigan State University

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Invited address for National Council of Staff Development, Annual Meeting, Detroit, Michigan, October 1982.

In an essay on what it means to teach, David Hawkins (1973) tells of an exchange between a veteran teacher of thirty-five years and a student teacher. The veteran commented that what held her to teaching after all these years was that there was still so much to be learned. The student teacher responded in amazement that she thought it could all be learned in two or three years. Hawkins observes: "It may be possible to learn in two or three years the kind of practice which then leads to another twenty years of learning. Whether many of our colleges get many of their students on to that fascinating track or whether the schools are geared to a thoughtful support of such learning by their teachers in another matter" (p. 7).

The two teachers in Hawkins' story represent competing views of teaching and learning to teach. The student teacher believes that learning to teach is the special province of the beginner. Once a certain level of mastery is achieved, the necessity for further learning on the teacher's part is basically over. Since teaching can be mastered in a relatively short time (two or three years), it must be rather predictable and routine work. By contrast, the veteran teacher believes that the work of teaching cannot by based entirely on past knowledge and experience. It must be informed by knowledge derived from studying the particular students and particular classroom situation. Moreover, this teacher recognizes that the classroom is not only a place to teach children, but a place to learn more about teaching and learning. For her, learning is part of the job of teaching.

Hawkins clearly admires the veteran teacher who, after thirty-five years, continues to learn from teaching. Perhaps she is one of those exceptional persons whose zest for learning and dedication to teaching keep

them going year after year. And yet, Hawkins does not focus on this teacher's individual qualities, qualities that no doubt characterized her before she became a teacher. Rather, he directs our attention to the institutional settings where teachers study and work. He asks whether the colleges that prepare teachers and the schools that employ them cultivate and support their capacity to learn from their teaching and to grow in their work. His observation implies that becoming a learning teacher is not only a matter of individual characteristics; it also depends on how teachers are prepared and under what conditions they carry out their work.

I use Hawkins' story to introduce my remarks today on the role of staff development in learning to teach because it contains all the important themes. I want to argue that, contrary to what most people think, learning to teach is or at least ought to be a major province of inservice rather than preservice teacher education.

The student teacher in Hawkins' story presents the prevailing view of learning to teach. When she says that learning to teach takes two or three years, she is probably thinking about a two year preservice undergraduate program and a year or so of on-the-job experience. Most people assume that a little formal preparation and some first hand experience is all anyone really needs to learn to teach. Indeed the traditional arrangements for preparing and certifying teachers reflect this viewpoint.

I believe we expect too much from learning experiences that occur before actual teaching, that most of the teacher's learning about practice can best or only occur on the job and probably not during the first year or teaching.

My argument is based on a review that I recently completed of the available research on learning to teach. This may strike you as a

fairly straightforward undertaking. Actually in order to find out what is known about learning to teach, one must first figure out what the phrase stands for. Does "learning to teach" mean learning a socially prescribed role or mastering the content to be taught or completing a certification program? All these interpretations and others have been linked with the notion of learning to teach and each points to a different body of research.

There are studies of teacher socialization and teacher development. There is research on teacher education and training at both the preservice and inservice levels. There is a body of literature on staff development and school improvement. There are autobiographies and descriptive accounts by teachers about their teaching experience over time. From all these sources one can begin to construct a general picture of how someone learns to teach and improves in teaching over time.

I have organized this body of research around a "learning to teach continuum." The continuum has four phases: a pretraining phase when prospective teachers do not realize they are learning things that will shape their future teaching; a preservice phase which includes formal preparation; an induction phase which coincides with the first year (or so) of teaching; and an inservice phase spanning the rest of the teacher's career.

As we journey together along this continuum I will focus on the learning about teaching that occurs at each phase and how it contributes to the teacher's capacity for continued learning. If, as I will argue, learning to teach primarily occurs on the job, than what goes before must lay the basis for learning from teaching.

The Pretraining Phase: Early Influences on Learning to Teach

Before teachers start their formal pedagogical work, they have already had considerable informal preparation for teaching. From infancy

onward, they have been taught many things by other people, most prominently their parents and teachers. They have also been exposed to patterns and ideas of teaching and schooling that pervade the culture.

Some researchers argue that formal teacher preparation is not strong enough to overcome the impact of early experiences which influence teachers' classroom behavior. For example, Lortie (1966, 1975) emphasizes the powerful role that being a student plays in becoming a teacher. "Teachers start their professional preparation early in life," he writes, "their entire school experience contributes to their work socialization" (1966, p. 56). From more than 10,000 hours of exposure to teachers, prospective teachers have stored up countless impressions of life in classrooms. From this apprenticeship of observation, students internalize models of teaching which are activated when they become teachers.

While some teachers recognize this influence from the past, Lortie suggests that many are probable influenced in ways they do not perceive. In the press of classroom interaction, teachers end up doing what their second grade teacher did when the children got restless.

Whether professional study can affect these powerful early experiences may depend on its power to cultivate alternative views (images) of what's possible and desirable.

The Preservice Phase of Learning to Teach

Most people think that when students enter college with the intention of becoming teachers, they spend most of their four years preparing for that role. Actually, "most of the degree requirements met by teacher education students are not related to learning about teaching, learning how to teach or demonstrating the ability to teach" (p. 24). Elementary education students spend 25% of their academic career in education courses and another 13% in some form of supervised practice. Secondary education

majors spend less. Still, many policy makers, teacher educators, and prospective teachers expect alot from teacher preparation.

Education courses are the most formal and systematic part of learning to teach. They offer an opportunity to expose future teachers to the knowledge base of the profession. What this knowledge base consists of is unclear. Some are confident about its value and promise; others point out the limitations of theory and research as a basis for educational practice.

The list of courses that education students take (philosphy of education, educational psychology, methods of teaching various subject matters) gives some indication of the knowledge presumed to be relevant to teaching. Unfortunately, we know very little about what these courses are like and how future teachers make sense of them. There is a general impression that teachers think their education courses are too theoretical and not sufficiently practical.

The part of teacher preparation that most teachers value is student teaching. It is also the most widely studied aspect of learning to teach. Most of the research focuses on how the attitudes and behavior of student teachers change as a result of their student teaching experience.

The findings from a recent field study (Tabachnick, Popkewitz & Zeichner, 1978) illustrate the dominant pattern and challenge the widespread belief that practical experience necessarily helps people become good teachers. From observations and interviews over the course of student teaching, researchers found the following:

1. Student teaching involved a very limited range of activities and interactions. When teaching occured, it was typically concerned with short-term skills or routine testing and management procedures.

2. Student teachers had little control over their classroom activities. Why something was taught was taken for granted and not questioned.

3. The student teachers defined the most significant problem of teaching as discipline. Keeping children busy and doing things that would insure that children moved through the lesson on time and in a quiet and orderly fashion became ends in themselves rather than means toward some specified educational purpose.

4. The student teachers seemed to develop a high degree of technical proficiency; however, they applied criteria of pupil success which were almost entirely utilitarian, separating their every day activities from their ideals b maintaining a distance between theory and practice.

While student teaching may give future teachers a taste of reality, it can also foster bad habits and narrow vision. What helps to solve an immediate problem may not be good teaching. A deceptive sense of success, equated with keeping order and discipline, can close off avenues for further learning.

The Induction Phase of Learning to Teach

Even under the best of circumstances, preservice teacher education can only provide a beginning. Whatever beginning teachers bring to their first teaching situation, that situation will have a powerful effect on them, shaping them to fit the requirements of the role and the place.

At the same time, the first encounter with "real" (as opposed to student) teaching enables beginners to start seeking answers to their own questions. As Herbert Kohl (1976) puts it, "the essentials of learning to teach begin when one has the responsibility for a class or group of young people. At that point, it begins to be possible to know what resources are needed, what questions need to be answered by more experienced teachers, and what skills one needs" (p. 11).

The first year of teaching is often called the induction phase or transition phase to signal the fact that it has a character of its own, that it is different from what has gone before and likely to influence what is to come. Some go so far as to argue that what

happens during the first year of teaching determines not only whether someone remains in teaching but also what kind of teacher they become. (We have no logitudinal data to support such clause).

Often beginning teachers approach their first assignments with idealistic and unrealistic expectations. After watching teachers for many years and participating in the routines and rituals of school life, beginning teachers may think they know what they are getting into. When they actually move to the other side of the teacher's desk, however, the once familiar scene looks strangely unfamiliar.

Many first year teachers are ambivalent about assuming the role of classroom leader. They are unsure about what to teach and how. They have little feel for students and insufficient experience to predict student response. They are also unclear about how to evaluate students and communicate with parents.

The responsibilities of the beginning teacher do not differ in any way from the responsibilities which an experienced teacher must handle. The need to act launches the beginning teacher on an intense period of trial and error learning. Lortie (1966) compares the beginner's entrance into the profession to Robinson Crusoe's struggle for survival. Like Defoe's hero, the beginning teacher may find that prior experience gives him some alternatives for action, but the crucial learning comes from personal errors. Like Defoe's hero, he also works largely along, fitting tegether solutions and problems. While this may leave some room for self-expression, it also narrows the range of alternatives that will be tried and increases the likelihood that the beginner will misinterpret successes and failures. What helps in the short run may not be educative in the long run.

From working alone, beginning teachers may come to believe that good teaching is something you figure out for yourself by trying one techinque after another. (Differences among teachers become matters of personal style.) Such beliefs work against a commitment to keep on learning and to hold high standards of effective practice that make such learning possible.

While survival may be the paramount goal of beginning teachers, how they survive will have consequences for the kind of teacher they will become. McDonald (1980) argues that the strategies a teacher uses to cope with first-year problems become the basis for a style that endures. In the final report of a recently completed study of induction programs and the problems of beginning teacher, he writes:

> The beginning teacher focuses on what is necessary to 'get the job done'--manage the class, prepare lessons, grade papers, teach each lesson. Effectiveness means doing these things reasonably well, without getting into trouble; it means being accepted, even liked by the students. The teaching practices which seem to produce these ends merge into a style, which--whatever its other merits--works for the beginner. This is his style, and he will rationalize it and ignore its limitations (p. 44).

Future professional growth can be limited by teachers' reluctance to give up the very practices which helped them get through.

The recent interest in induction programs for beginning teachers highlights the fact that no formal agency is responsible for helping beginners make a successful transition into teaching. But there is a danger that induction efforts will be directed toward eliminating the problems of the beginning teacher rather than sustaining them in on the job learning. Unnecessary trauma should certainly be avoided but problems can serve a useful function by alerting one to things that need work. If we focus too narrowly on helping beginning teachers fit in comfortably we may diminish their motivation to experiment with more

effective practices. I prefer to subsume at least some of the problems of the beginning teacher under under a broader perspective that looks at learning to teach and learning from teaching over a broader time frame.

On-The-Job Learning: The Inservice Phase

Some researchers and teacher educators have put forward descriptions of the "stages" teachers go through as they gain experience in teaching. Most of these descriptions posit three stages: a beginning stage of survival, a middle stage of consolidation, and a final stage of mastery. The stages are loosely tied to the amounts of teaching experience, even though there is a recognition of the fact that teachers change at different rates. As one teacher put it: "I was a beginning teacher for three years."

The first stage is generally associated with the first year of teaching which we have just looked at. The second stage extends through the third or fourth years of teaching. Growing confidence and mastery of basic teaching tasks enable teachers to concentrate less on themselves and more on their teaching. Concerns about "Can I?" change to questions about "How to." Increased self-confidence encourages feelings of worth, and success provides some appropriate and reliable solutions to problems. "Stage two" teachers have extended planning from one day at a time to weeks. They have a better grasp of long term goals and are more comfortable with the teacher's role.

The third stage is characterized by a sense of confidence and ease. The mechanics of teaching and classroom management are under control. Teachers can begin to think about whether pupils are learning what the teacher is teaching and whether the instructional content is appropriate for the students. Whereas the beginning teacher focuses on the immediate problem--today, this child, that lesson--the stage 3 teacher is interested in the overall pattern.

First year teachers are confused and uncertain about many aspects of teaching. Five years later, give or take, if they are still teaching, most teachers feel confident, secure and relatively competent. They know how things are done in their school and they can function smoothly in the classroom. They have discovered that students are people and can allow students to see their own personal side as well. They do not necessarily think that they know all the answers but they feel more secure in what they are trying to do. The extent comes through in the following retrospective observations about the first and fifth year of teaching taken from interviews conducted by Paul Burden with experienced teachers.

> (My first year) was frightening. It was all of a sudden the feeling of bringing everything I was supposed to know together and really doing something with it. I had a great feeling of responsibility and a feeling of maybe not being able to handle it. It was a lot of apprehension and a lot of wanting to do well. I think there was a feeling that I couldn't measure up. (p. 122)

But over time, the picture changes.

> I'm really feeling like I know what's going on and I feel that I am able to look more objectively at school and say this is where I want to go this year and with these kids. I'm able to do that now ahead of time a little more than before. And I'm able to 'read' my class a little more quickly and know what they're going to need. I feel like I have more resources to draw from in handling situations and knowing what to teach and how to deal with people. So I do feel kind of like a mature teacher. (p. 124)

The stage descriptions suggest that a major part of learning to teach occurs on the job, in the first five to seven years. During this segment of the inservice phase, teachers master the craft of teaching in one form or another and learn to live the life of a teacher. How such changes come about and where teachers go from here is not well understood, but the fact remains that alot of learning is going on. Moreover it is only <u>after</u> teachers move beyond the

coping stage, after they learn how to get along with colleagues and administrators, develop some workable routines, make some sense of the curriculum and get a feel for their students that they can begin to think about whether their teaching is making a difference. That is at the heart of effective teaching. Thus we could say that it takes several years of experience for teachers to move from a focus on learning to teach to a focus on learning to teach well.

Some teachers never get to the place where they are questioning the relationship between their teaching and children's learning. They let others set the minimum requirements and they carry out their routines year after year. Often nothing in their work experience gives them a different conception of their job. But some teachers do get to the place where they are concerned about the effectiveness of their own performance and motivated to improve it.

Unfortunately helping teachers get here is not often taken seriously as a legitimate inservice priority. Despite the centrality of on-the-job learning, schools have no well defined structures for helping teachers learn from the every day experience of classroom teaching. Nor have they given priority to what teachers feel are job-related needs.

Teacher centers, represent a significant departure from traditional focus of inservice. What distinguishes teacher centers from most school districts and university inservice programs is their responsiveness to teachers' self-defined needs and their faith in teachers' potential for professional growth. Not every teacher center has a clear commitment to teacher development (a subject for another talk) but those that do try to respond to immediate needs without losing sight of long-term goals. The strategy that typifies this developmental style is advisory work. Unlike inservice coordinators, the advisor is not responsible for implementing official

policy. Unlike curriculum specialists and principals, the role carries no supervisory or evaluative funtions. The focus is on concentrated work in the teacher's own situation with the purpose of helping teachers improve their practice. The long-term goal is to stimulate teachers' critical thinking about their work (Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel, 1976).

This individualized form of inservice has something to offer teachers at every stage of development. Beginning teachers need support and advice from someone they trust as a mentor. Middle stage teachers want practical assistance, but they also need the encouragement to look closely at what they are doing and why. The most important role for advisors working with middle stage teachers is "to keep alive a vision of what education might become and to insist on an attitude of inquiry, even when it is uncomfortable" (p. 8). Finally, the advisory role offers master teachers a chance to share their expertise with less experienced colleagues, which can also be a powerful form of professional development.

I believe the teacher center concept represents a serious effort to identify conditions that will support teachers' learning. Still, centers have been criticized for emphasizing work with individual teachers and paying less attention to the effects of schools on individuals. It appears that patterns of participation in center activities and teachers' latitude to experiment in their classrooms are influenced by expectations in the schools where they work. There is no getting around the fact that it is easier to be a learning teacher in some schools that in others.

The daily work of teaching shapes teachers' notions about how one becomes a good teacher. It would not be surprising, for example, if many teachers believed that learning to teach was a matter of independent trial and error with occasional assistance from others.

As we have seen, this view is built into the typical conditions of the first years of teaching and it is also reflected in the norms that govern both asking and offering help. Many teachers are cautious about revealing problems and reticent to enter the private domain of another tehacher's classroom. Thus, the chance to see advice played out or get feedback on one's own progress is limited. Ironically, these are some of the preconditions for getting better at teaching. The isolation of teachers in their classrooms also makes it easier to stick to comfortable practices without having to justify them in terms of students' learning.

Despite these dominant patterns, schools differ. Judith Little (1981), for example has identified two powerful norms that appear to characterize schools where teachers view their own continued learning as part of the job of teaching. The "norm of collegiality" refers to the expectation that improving one's teaching is a collective undertaking. The "norm of continuous improvement" refers to expectations that analysis, evaluation and experimentation are tools of the profession that help teachers be more effective. Both norms are shaped by the kinds of interactions that teachers have in the normal course of their work. Little identifies four kinds of practices or types of interactions which are commonplace in schools where collegial experimentation is part of the way of life:

1. frequent talk among teachers about the practice of teaching,
2. frequent opportunities to observe and evaluate one another's teaching, and
3. regular opportunities to design and evaluate teaching materials.

These interactions occur in various locations--training sessions, faculty meetings, teachers' lounges, hallways, and classrooms. They focus on specific practices as distinct from teachers, which helps to preserve self-respect and minimize barriers to discussion. They tend to

to involve a large portion of the faculty. The important thing is - they help teachers develop the skills to identify and solve their own problems and they convey the expectation that developing ones teaching ability is part of the job of teaching.

In studying effective inservice programs, researchers from the Rand Corporation discovered that successful districts did not have a program per se but a point of view which explicitly acknowledged teachers as professionals and visible supported their efforts to grow and learn. One tangible sign of this point of view was the existence of a teacher center which provided a context for "useful peer interaction, for cross-fertilization, and for peer evaluation." The researchers judged these informal activities as more important that any new technologies or formal center programs (McLaughlin, 1977, p. 80).

Traditional approaches to inservice training and school reform reflect different expectations and practices. They try to eliminate the process of professional learning with teacher-proof packages and one-shot training by outside experts. They convey a message that teachers are deficient and that others (researchers, administrators, legislators) know better what teachers need to improve.

There is growing evidence that an approach which views teachers as professionals and visibly supports their efforts to learn is more effective and enduring. The capacities that enable teachers to make something work are not unique to a given program or innovation. They are the same capacities that teachers use when they develop materials, adapt their instruction to fit the needs of individual students, monitor their teaching and make necessary changes. If schools were organized so that teachers engaged in these activities as part of their work, we would not have to mount special training efforts in response to every new social mandate or school innovation. The structures to deal with change would already be in place.

To sum up - we have journeyed together along the learning to teach continuum. In the process, we have seen the glaring mismatch between formal arrangements for teaching teachers and the actual processes of t achers' learning.

If I have convinced you that (1) learning to teach broadly defined is the proper province of staff development and that (2) earning teachers reflect the opportunities and expectations that surround them in their work, I will have accomplished my purpose today. Effective schools have been defined by my colleague Ron Edmonds as places where students learn. It is time to include in our definition a requirement about teachers' learning as well.

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